

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01 INR-05 L-01

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 IO-04 ACDA-05 DRC-01 /064 W

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R 151718Z OCT 74

FM AMEMBASSY BONN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5651

INFO USMISSION BERLIN

AMCONSUL BREMEN

AMCONSUL DUSSELDORF

AMCONSUL FRANKFURT

AMCONSUL HAMBURG

AMCONSUL MUNICH

AMCONSUL STUTTGART

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C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (SUMMARY PARA OMISSIONS)

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, GW

SUBJECT: STRAUSS SOUNDS OFF

REF: BONN 15991

BEGIN SUMMARY: FRANZ JOSEF STRAUSS GRABBED THE HEAD-
LINES OVER THE WEEKEND, TELLING STERN AND SPIEGEL THAT
NEITHER KOHL NOR STOLTENBERG IS THE IDEAL CHANCELLOR
CANDIDATE BUT THAT HE (STRAUSS) COULD LEAD THE PARTY TO
VICTORY. HAVING WATCHED HIS BOMB EXPLODE, STRAUSS NOW
CLAIMS IT WAS ALL A GREAT MISUNDERSTANDING. END SUMMARY.

1. ADVANCE REPORTS OF STRAUSS' STATEMENTS TO STERN AND
SPIEGEL PUT THE "KANZLERMACHER" ON PAGE ONE OVER THE
WEEKEND. A DPA ITEM REPORTED THAT THE OCTOBER 14 SPIEGEL
WOULD CONTAIN AN INTERVIEW WITH STRAUSS IN WHICH "STRAUSS

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SAYS HE CONSIDERS IT POSSIBLE THAT AS A CHANCELLOR

CANDIDATE HE WOULD BE ABLE TO ASSURE THE CDU/CSU AN ABSOLUTE MAJORITY." THE PRESS ALSO CARRIED REPORTS OF A STERN INTERVIEW WITH STRAUSS TO BE PUBLISHED OCTOBER 17, REPORTEDLY CONTAINING THE FOLLOWING EXCHANGE: "QUESTION: THE CDU/CSU IS HAVING DIFFICULTIES CONCERNING A CHANCELLOR CANDIDATE. ARE YOU NOT THE ONLY POLITICAL HEAVYWEIGHT IN THE CDU/CSU? STRAUSS' ANSWER: HMM, THAT IS NOTHING. YOU DON'T BELIEVE THAT EITHER. QUESTION: WHY ARE YOU NOT A CANDIDATE? STRAUSS: MR. KOHL IS AN EXTRAORDINARILY SUCCESSFUL MINISTER PRESIDENT. HE HIMSELF MUST KNOW WHERE HIS LIMITS ARE. MR. STOLTENBERG HAS A GREAT REPUTATION. I HAVE NOT ANNOUNCED ANY INTENTIONS, ONLY I DON'T WANT TO BE CONSIDERED AS A NEGATIVE FIGURE FROM THE VERY BEGINNING. I HAVE NO REASON TO BE THAT."

2. THE PRESS PLAYED UP "THE REACTION OF CONSTERNATION IN CDU CIRCLES" AND THE MEETING OF THE CDU'S PRAESIDIUM AND EXECUTIVE BOARD IN FRANKFURT ON OCTOBER 14 TO DISCUSS THE STRAUSS STATEMENTS. FOLLOWING THE MEETING, KOHL TOLD THE PRESS ONLY THAT "THE PARTY REJECTS ANY PUBLIC EVALUATION OF PERSONALITIES IN THE CDU AND CSU." HE REPEATED THAT THE QUESTION OF A CHANCELLOR CANDIDATE SHOULD BE DISCUSSED AFTER THE ELECTIONS IN HESS AND BAVARIA, LEAVING OPEN THE DATE FOR AN ACTUAL DECISION.

3. SHORTLY BEFORE THE MEETING OF THE CDU PRAESIDIUM, STRAUSS EMBARKED ON ATTEMPTS TO SET THE RECORD STRAIGHT, CLAIMING THAT THE ADVANCE SUMMARIES PROVIDED BY SPIEGEL AND STERN TO THE PRESS WERE GREATLY DISTORTED.

4. IN FACT, THE SPIEGEL SUMMARY DID OMIT SEVERAL VITAL PHRASES. THE RELEVANT PORTION OF THE INTERVIEW READS AS FOLLOWS: "SPIEGEL: DO YOU MEAN THAT WITH YOU AS A CHANCELLOR CANDIDATE, THE CDU/CSU WOULD NOT HAVE AN

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FM AMEMBASSY BONN
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ABSOLUTE MAJORITY IN ITS POCKET? STRAUSS: AFTER ALL, I AM NOT A MEGALOMANIAC. I CONSIDER IT POSSIBLE, BUT VERY PROBLEMATICAL." EARLIER IN THE INTERVIEW, WHEN ASKED IF HE MIGHT BE A CHANCELLOR CANDIDATE, STRAUSS HAD REPLIED, "FORGET THAT, THAT LEADS NOWHERE."

5. IN AN INTERVIEW WITH THE WEST GERMAN RADIO ON OCTOBER 14 STRAUSS SAID: "I DO NOT BELONG TO THE CIRCLE OF THREE - FIVE CHANCELLOR CANDIDATES. I WILL NOT MAKE AN EFFORT IN THIS DIRECTION." HE ADDED, "I DO NOT AVOID RESPONSIBILITY WHEN I AM NEEDED. BUT I AM PREPARED TO PARTICIPATE LOYALLY IN SELECTING A SUITABLE CANDIDATE AND TO HELP TO GET HIM ELECTED. NATURALLY FOR ME CDU CHAIRMAN KOHL, WHOM I CONSIDER NOT ONLY AN EXCELLENT MINISTER PRESIDENT BUT ALSO A HIGHLY QUALIFIED POLITICIAN, HAS A CERTAIN PRIORITY."
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6. SPD AND FDP SPOKESMEN HAVE REACTED GLEEFULLY TO THE CONFUSION. LOTHAR SCHWARTZ, SPOKESMAN AT SPD HEAD-QUARTERS, DECLARED THAT STRAUSS HAS MADE IT BRUTALLY CLEAR THAT HE HAS THE LAST WORD WITHIN THE OPPOSITION. FDP SECRETARY GENERAL BANGEMANN LABELED STRAUSS' COMMENTS AS "A CLEAR DEMONSTRATION OF THE INTERNAL DISUNITY OF THE CDU/CSU."
HILLENBRAND

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